

Safety

INITIATIVES



Washington School for the Deaf

Leonard Aron, Superintendent

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Final Report to the Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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January 2002

Dear Governor:

I am pleased to present this final Safety Initiatives Summary Report. The report provides a comprehensive summary of the actions we've taken, the outcomes we've experienced, and a description of our continued commitment to the safety of all students on our campus.

Thank you for your continued support of the progress we've made at the Washington School for the Deaf. Once again, the Monitoring Panel has proven an invaluable resource to my staff and I over the past few months.

The Washington School for the Deaf is a safe, nurturing academic and living environment for all Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. The changes and actions taken since June 25, 2001 have strengthened our skills, our infrastructure, and our policies to create the systematic tools to ensure the continued safety of all students. Safety will always be our top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leonard Aron".

Leonard Aron
Superintendent

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In February 2001, Governor Gary Locke assigned two independent reviews of the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) to improve policies and procedures relating to student safety in the residence program. In response to the reports generated from these reviews, on June 25, 2001, the Governor directed the school to implement the following administrative actions no later than January 1, 2002:

- Strengthen the school's admission policy
- Develop a written policy that outlines conditions under which the school will expel students due to behavior that poses a serious threat to the health or safety of either him/herself or other students
- Create a residential program staffing model
- Produce a training curriculum for staff on emotional and behavioral disturbances in children, in partnership with a local community children's mental health provider or similar expert
- Implement a school-wide physical and sexual abuse training curriculum for students
- Strengthen communication among staff and between the academic and residential programs
- Refine the student behavioral management policy
- Review the school's incident documentation and procedures with staff from the Attorney General's office, the Division of Licensed Resources and the Child Abuse Intervention Center in Vancouver
- Work with budget staff to incorporate any needed safety enhancement items into the school's supplemental budget request

Governor Locke also appointed an independent monitoring panel, composed of community members with expertise in different aspects of child safety, to work with the school in the implementation of his directive.

In addition, Governor Locke directed the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), to conduct annual reviews of the operations and staffing of the school's residential program with an emphasis on student safety. Further, the Governor indicated that he would commission a review of national best practices in mixed-age residential programs to obtain additional information about practices that promote student safety in this setting. Finally, Governor Locke directed Superintendent Len Aron to work with legislators and the Governor's staff to explore options for a revised governance structure.

Progress

Since June 2001, the Washington School for the Deaf has worked diligently to complete a systematic overhaul of processes, procedures, and policies to ensure that student safety remains our top priority. Several professional review committees have provided comprehensive reviews and recommendations to the organization over the past few months. In addition, the Governor's monitoring panel provided exceptional assistance to staff to ensure the most effective implementation of the directives.

The following provides a summary of the systematic changes that will allow WSD to continue to ensure the ongoing safety of all students and staff on our campus:

- **Policies** - New admissions and expulsions policies, coupled with staff training on interpreting IDEA law, will help administrators screen current and potential students to better determine if WSD has the capacity/expertise to meet the child's educational needs. In addition, the adoption of the Safe and Civil Schools behavior model focuses on positive expectations for students.
- **Procedures** - Updated residential procedures, coupled with ongoing staff training and evaluations, have better outlined staff supervisory, incident reporting, and discipline responsibilities. The procedures provided a much-needed tool for staff clarity, and accountability. The residential procedures model will continue to be utilized to create and/or update other procedures throughout the campus as needed.
- **Training** - The creation of a comprehensive staff training model, the integration of student abuse-awareness curriculum in the academic and residential programs, procedure training, and technology training have set the standard for all WSD staff and students. Training reflects best practices, and addresses many of the needs indicated in the reviews by outside committees.
- **Incident Reporting Practices** - By establishing consistent reporting procedures modeled from the Safe and Civil Schools program, and implementing ongoing incident reporting training for relevant staff, WSD has created a much more effective, consistent system that allows data tracking and evaluation. These new tools will allow designated staff to monitor student behaviors, identify problem behaviors/ repeat offenders, and to address behaviors in a manner that helps ensure the continued safety of both the troubled student, and the remaining student body.
- **Data Tracking** - WSD has implemented an incident data tracking program modeled from Safe and Civil Schools. Incident report data is now examined monthly by a review team consisting of supervising teachers and teachers to identify problem areas and make changes where necessary to improve student behavior, and reduce risk. In addition, data is reviewed monthly by the Director of Special Education and Academic Programs, and lastly by the Superintendent where it is compiled into quarterly reports to the Governor. This system provides greater accountability at the student level to identify problem behaviors, and make necessary changes to improve behavior and reduce risk.
- **Increased Staff** - Several new staff members were added to WSD prior to the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year to provide better supervisory coverage of students during busy times of the day. Included was an additional residential supervisor and a backup floater who provides support to Student Life Counselors.
- **Communication** - WSD has established effective methods for measuring ongoing internal and external communication needs, related to technology, training, and procedures. With the aid of the ESD 112 Public Information Office, WSD has identified and continues to address internal and external communication needs.
- **Financial Needs** - With the aid of several outside review committees, and the development of a supplemental budget request, WSD has identified the financial investment needed to continue to meet the ongoing safety and educational needs of all WSD students and staff.
- **Independent Reviews** - (1) An independent review by the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman was completed on December 5, 2001. Through this review, the Ombudsman sought to understand the seriousness and frequency of sex-related incidents reported at WSD, and to examine the response to these incidents by WSD, CPS, and law enforcement. (2) The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), completed the first annual review of the operations and staffing of the school's residential program with an emphasis on student safety in December 2001. (3) The Governor's office will be contracting with Washington State University Vancouver to conduct a study of national best practices in mixed-age residential programs to obtain additional information about practices that promote student safety in this setting.

Outcomes

- **Data** - Collection of suspension rate data, and analysis of behavior referrals data are indicators of improved student safety. Since September 2001, behavior data shows a 50% decrease in suspensions in the elementary/middle school, and a 100% decrease in the high school since the beginning of the school year. Close to 70% of students have received no behavior referrals since the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year. Another 10-12% have received only one behavior referral.
- **Staff training** - Underlying our staff training is the core belief that if you train people, they will be better equipped to prevent problem behaviors, and handle problem behaviors effectively. Over the past four months, suspensions at WSD have decreased, the number of incidents reported has dramatically reduced, and the number of CPS reports has also dropped significantly.
- **Increased staff** - As a result of added residential staff, staff now have more access to supervisors, improving communication, staff accountability, and compliance with our ideal staff-to-student ratio.
- **Refined behavior system** - Data indicates that in the residence and the high school program most negative behaviors are related to disobedience and defiance, fairly typical behaviors for children. Clear communication is being stressed in this area. In the elementary/middle school program negative behaviors center on physical aggression which is typical of children with language delays. Problem-solving techniques are being used with these children. All of the behaviors are being addressed with the new behavior curriculum, language development programs, and counseling for offenders. In addition, behaviors are being addressed in IEP meetings with parents.
- **Student abuse-awareness training** - Ongoing abuse-awareness training has better equipped staff and students to recognize and report student abuse. Since September 2001, there have been only seven total incidents reported to CPS, only one of which was campus related. This is compared to 5-10 incidents reported per month during the 2000-2001 school year.
- **Established data tracking systems** - Students who are recognized as needing additional support due to the number and type of behavior referrals are given individual, ongoing, in-house counseling. To date, six high school students and seven elementary/middle school students have been referred and are involved in one-on-one sessions.

Next Steps

To ensure the continued safety of all students and staff at WSD, we have institutionalized all changes as issued by the Governor and outside review committees. Safety will continue to be a goal incorporated into our Balanced Scorecard reporting structure, allowing us to formally set annual safety goals, and report our progress.

In addition, WSD now has the tools in place to continually monitor data to determine a change in the percentage of behavior incidents on a monthly basis.

SAFETY CHANGES MONITORING PANEL

A six-member independent monitoring panel was assigned by Governor Locke to oversee the implementation of the administrative actions directed on June 25, 2001.

Members of the Governor's Safety Changes Monitoring Panel include:

Judge Diane Woolard, of Vancouver, served as chair of the panel. Locke appointed Woolard to the Clark County bench of the Superior Court in July 2000. She was previously employed for 12 years with the state Department of Social and Health Services.

Dr. Douglas D. Baker, of Pullman, is vice provost for academic affairs and a professor in the Washington State University Management and Decision Sciences Department. He is the father of a 9 year-old hearing-impaired daughter who does not attend the Washington School for the Deaf.

Lucy Berliner, MSW, of Seattle, is director of the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress and a clinical associate professor at the University of Washington School of Social Work and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Dr. Rose Calderon, of Seattle, is an associate professor in the University of Washington Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Department and director of psychiatry services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children at Children's Hospital and Medical Center.

Douglas W. Mass, of Vancouver, is president/CEO of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. Mass is a Vietnam veteran who worked 25 years in law enforcement. He retired in 2000 as chief of police for the city of Vancouver. He was a member of the Washington School for the Deaf Blue Ribbon Committee in 1999-2000.

Tom Rembiesa, of Seattle, is the executive director of the Ruth Dykeman Center in Seattle, which provides treatment and residential services for at-risk children and youth. Rembiesa serves as peer reviewer for the national Council on Accreditation for Services to Children and Families and the Child Welfare League of America's national advisory committee on residential care.

ADMISSION AND EXPULSION POLICY REVISIONS

DIRECTIVE

- Strengthen the school's admission policy.
- Develop a written policy that outlines conditions under which the school will expel students due to behavior that poses a serious threat to the health or safety of either him/herself or other students.

DIRECTIVE LEADER

Tommy Meehan
Director of Special Education and Academic Programs
(360) 418-0402 (V/TTY)
tommy.meehan@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL

To develop policy for defining admission and expulsion criteria and procedures for students at the Washington School for the Deaf. To develop and apply a criteria screening matrix for scoring admission-eligibility to new applicants. To apply criteria screening matrix to currently enrolled students in a review for compliance with new policy.

PROGRESS

Steps Taken

- Conducted national research to determine best practices.
- Reviewed draft policy with key outside professionals and constituents.
- Implemented the new admissions and expulsions policies at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year.
- All new applicants are now screened using the criteria of the new admissions policy. New applicants will continue to be screened using the Needs Assessment Inventory Interview (NAII) and the Safety Risk Matrix.
- Communicated change in policy to all WSD parents, school district superintendents and special education directors. Provided communication tools and forums to ensure complete understanding of the policy change.
- All currently enrolled WSD students were reviewed based on the new expulsion criteria to determine their safety risk.
- A referral list of professionals servicing at-risk children has been initiated and will continue to grow as new names and recommendations become available.
- All students of concern will be reviewed to determine the nature of safety issues. Individualized safety plans will be developed as needed. In addition, if changes of placement become necessary, those will be addressed.
- Parents of all students will receive a NAII by mail to complete and return to the school.

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM STAFFING MODEL

DIRECTIVE Create a residential program staffing model

DIRECTIVE LEADER Nancy Sinkovitz, Residential Program Supervisor
(360) 418-4380 (V/TTY)
nancy.sinkovitz@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL To ensure adequate staff coverage and student supervision of Washington School for the Deaf students while in the residential program.

PROGRESS Steps Taken

- Consulted with Educational Service District 112 (ESD 112) to update residential procedures to establish more clarity and consistency, particularly as it pertains to staff supervision responsibilities.
- Added staff to ensure compliance with our 1:7 staff-to-student ratio, including one additional graveyard dean, another first line supervisor position (dean), and reassigning one student life counselor to the position of floater.
- Requested feedback on the updated procedures from the Department of Social and Health Services' Children's Administration's Division of Licensed Resources.
- Initiated ongoing residential and recreation staff training to ensure understanding of procedures and staff accountability.
- Began ensuring staff compliance with procedures via individual performance evaluations, weekly staff meetings, and periodic written assessments.
- Divided the north school bus into two separate buses to provide an improved staff-to-student supervision ratio.
- Submitted budget proposals to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to hire three additional student life counselors and one additional first line supervisor to improve supervision ratios.
- Modified the after school activities schedule to provide better accountability of students. All students (whether day or residential) must check into their assigned residence before transitioning to after school activities.
- Established a uniform study hour to allow students to be assisted and supervised without undue concern about supervising students in activities outside the residences.

STAFF TRAINING: BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES

DIRECTIVE Produce a training curriculum for staff on emotional and behavioral disturbances in children, in partnership with a local community children's mental health provider or similar expert.

DIRECTIVE LEADER Amy Cohen-Efron, WSD School Psychologist
(360) 418-4356 (TTY)
amy.cohen-efron@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL All WSD staff will receive training focusing on emotional and behavioral issues.

PROGRESS Steps Taken

- Consulted with Educational Service District 112 (ESD 112) to develop and deliver a two-hour introductory, all-staff training to introduce basic theories and information about child behavior among Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.
- Consulted with ESD 112 to develop a comprehensive staff training curriculum focusing on emotional and behavioral issues among Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.
- Solicited and incorporated feedback from key professionals into the staff curriculum.
- Developed and submitted a comprehensive budget proposal for ongoing staff development training and support focusing on emotional and behavioral issues to the Office of Financial Management.
- Identified core group of trainers (eight WSD staff) and established a timeline for implementing the training.
- Proposed three different budget scenarios for ongoing training and support.

STAFF TRAINING: STUDENT ABUSE AWARENESS

DIRECTIVE Implement a school-wide physical and sexual abuse training curriculum for students

DIRECTIVE LEADER Valerie Ryan, Supervising Teacher
(360) 418-4347 (V/TTY)
valerie.ryan@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL To develop, adopt and implement an abuse awareness training curriculum for WSD staff.

PROGRESS

Steps Taken

- Researched available curriculums over one year.
- The residential and academic supervisory team selected and purchased the "ON" curriculum published by Scriptographics.
- Curriculum materials were shared with parents at the first open house, on October 27, 2001.
- Developed and distributed a staff curriculum schedule, which maps materials adoption and expectations for academic and residential staff.
- Initial curriculum evaluations were conducted through supervisor observations and discussions with students.
- To measure the impact the student training has on improving student safety, the supervisory team began reviewing behavior referrals quarterly to compare them to the data collected last year. The team will continue to look for data that would show a change in behavior patterns in regard to personal space, respect for each other and student-to-student violence.

STRENGTHEN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

DIRECTIVE Strengthen communication among staff and between the academic and residential programs

DIRECTIVE LEADER Chuck McCarthy, Financial Operations Administrator
(360) 418-0412 (V/TTY)
chuck.mccarthy@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL To strengthen the internal communication system.

PROGRESS

Steps Taken

- Technology needs were assessed over the 2000-2001 school year in the form of the state mandated Information Technology Portfolio and the WSD's six-year technology plan.
- Addressed barriers of outdated or incompatible technology by adding eight PCs in the dormitories, and 20 laptop computers to the educational department.
- Addressed staff technology training needs via two one-week training sessions during July 2001.
- Added a computer technician to staff to handle computer repairs and problems as they arise.
- Consulted with Educational Service District 112 (ESD 112) to assess internal and external communication needs via a comprehensive communication audit.
- Developed and implemented mandatory communication opportunities between academic and residential staff through three open houses where student progress and other specific issues are discussed.
- Consulted with ESD 112 to establish a formal internal and external communication program.
- Determined campus-wide technology training needs to assess the feasibility and/or expense of mandatory technology training.
- Engaged in ongoing meetings to determine best allocation of technology funds.

RESIDENTIAL LEVEL SYSTEM

DIRECTIVE Refine the student behavioral management policy

DIRECTIVE LEADER Valerie Ryan, Supervising Teacher
(360) 418-4357 (V/TTY)
valerie.ryan@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL WSD will develop, introduce and implement a revised behavior system to replace the existing residential level system. This system will be applied to all students at any time they are on the WSD campus or participating in any school sponsored event.

PROGRESS Steps Taken

- To meet the needs of all students, regardless of age or handicapping condition, consulted with Educational Service District 112 (ESD 112); Bonnie Terada, Assistant Attorney General; the Foundation for Learning; and the Safe and Civil Schools Task Force to develop a new 24-hour behavior system. This system replaces the former level system.
- Included the new behavior system description in an updated parent/student handbook, distributed to parents on September 9, 2001.
- Introduced students to the new behavior system during the first week of the school year. The focus was on teaching behavior expectations, which is in accordance with the Washington state Safe and Civil Schools project.
- Identified 12 key staff to serve as staff behavior program trainers through the Safe and Civil Schools program, led by OSPI.
- Introduced the new behavior system to all staff through an 8-10 hours of mandatory training, held at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year.
- Reviewed first quarter student behaviors to identify staff who may require additional training. Implemented additional training to identified staff.
- Established a data review system, in which designated staff collect behavior data quarterly to:
 - Track student behavior to identify the type and frequency of problem behavior
 - Determine behavior program areas that need to be re-addressed via staff or student training.

INCIDENT DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING

DIRECTIVE Review the school's incident documentation and procedures with staff from the Attorney General's office, the Division of Licensed Resources and the Child Abuse Intervention Center in Vancouver

DIRECTIVE LEADER Nancy Sinkovitz, Residential Program Supervisor
(360) 418-4380 (V/TTY)
nancy.sinkovitz@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL Convene a work group to review WSD's present incident documentation, CPS reporting, police reporting, and school response practices to ensure they comply with best practice models.

PROGRESS

Steps Taken

- The School Resource Officer developed a written explanation of the reporting flowchart to utilize during staff training.
- The School Resource Officer created a database for recording, numbering and tracking incidents/events.
- The School Resource Officer began a training program for the Residential Program Supervisors and Supervising Teachers on the use of the database.
- Residential Program Supervisors and Supervising Teachers began training staff over the course of the first semester on the revised incident/event documentation and reporting procedures.
- Residential Program Supervisors and Supervising Teachers will continue to monitor compliance with the best practices in incident/event documentation via individual performance evaluations and weekly staff meetings.

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET REQUEST

DIRECTIVE Work with budget staff to incorporate any needed safety enhancement items into the school's supplemental budget request

DIRECTIVE LEADER Leonard Aron, Superintendent
(360) 418-0400 (V/TTY)
len.aron@wsd.wa.gov

DIRECTIVE GOAL To develop a comprehensive supplemental budget for the Governor's review.

PROGRESS A final supplemental budget request was submitted to OFM by October 15, 2001. The budget request included the following:

1. Ongoing Costs (\$235,200 per year)
 - a. Addition of two residential deans (\$75,600 per year)
 - b. Addition of three residential student life counselors (\$97,500 per year)
 - c. Addition of one bus monitor for weekend student transportation (\$32,500 per year)
 - d. Monthly joint academic and residential staff meetings (\$22,000 per year).
 - e. Leasing 100 one-way pagers for WSD staff (\$7,600 per year).
2. One-time Costs (\$25,000)
 - a. Revised residential policies and procedures (\$10,000)
 - b. Train-the-trainer program for staff to deal with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children who present at-risk behaviors (\$15,000)



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